



Tips & Tricks Using FamilySearch Historical Records Collection

Goal

Find historical data about Ancestor(s).

Basic Factors

Three main factors are coordinates in identifying persons: 1) name, 2) place, & 3) time. No one person can be in more than one place at one time. Variations in names, places, and times must always converge in order to produce valid identity or valid results.

The data base in FamilySearch.org includes billions of documents from a wide variety of sources. Choosing which source area in which to search is an automatic limiting factor. For example, a general search usually includes all U.S. records whereas choosing to search only in Germany or Japan will limit the search strictly to the data base for those countries. The same principle applies to any of the other restricting areas such as name variations and time variations.

The search engine in FamilySearch.org functions best by starting wide and then narrowing the search by adding filters – i.e. each additional detail becomes a narrowing factor. Also the FamilySearch.org search engine will search for only those documents which include all of the provided details which causes documents which only include a few of the details to be excluded from the results. Trick: Use another website such as Ancestry.com (<http://www.ancestry.com>), which employs all provided details to include all possible results. Other websites often provide an ideal complement to FamilySearch.org. This is why FamilySearch.org has formed official partnerships with other search providers.

Names

Tips:

1. Every person may use a number of variations for his/her given name during a lifetime.
2. Surnames have many variant spellings depending on time, place, or other circumstances at the time of any given record.

Tricks:

1. Consider appropriate name variations according to time and place.
2. Use alternate websites to get ideas for possible name variants – e.g. <http://forebears.io/surnames>.
3. Use the * to replace vowels or other possible variants in name spellings.
4. Use multiple names in the “other” category of the historical search template

Places

Tips:

1. Place names may also change for various historical and political reasons.
2. Often the spelling of place names does not get accurately recorded causing searches to go awry because the actual place name which was entered is no longer valid or misspelled.

Tricks:

1. Consider appropriate name variations according to time and place.
2. Use the * to replace vowels or other possible variants in place name spellings.
3. Use alternate websites to get ideas for possible place name variants – e.g. fuzzy gazetteer at <http://isodp.hof-university.de/fuzzyg/query/>

Time (Dates)

Tips:

1. Dates are often recorded in a variety of ways and with varying accuracy. Sometimes different calendar systems are used – e.g. the Napoleonic calendar.
2. A person's age often varies depending on what time of year a record was created.

Tricks:

1. Enter a year range from 5 to ten years to include any possible date variations.
2. Use other websites for information about possible historical, political calendaric variances.

Research Strategy

1. Start with only the surname of the person for whom records are being sought.
2. Add details such as given name, birth date, or search-specific items (i.e. no death date if searching for birth data) one at a time and click "Update" button each time.
3. If desired results are not found, change the search parameters and search again.
4. Use filters to narrow the search. You can add and remove as many filters as you need.
5. Try narrowing the search to a specific collection. Collections are listed toward the bottom left of the search panel. Repeat the process using variations of details and filters.
6. Add relationships and add life events. Continue to repeat process clicking the "Update" button each time.
7. Use the Browse-Only collections. FamilySearch.org has many record collections that have not yet been indexed. You can access these record collections online though you will have to search them page by page. Don't ignore these collections, despite the time it takes to use them as they are often goldmines of information.

Online Video Instruction

- Enter "Record Search Tips on FamilySearch" in the Search box of the Learning Center (<https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/home.html>) or use this link: <https://familysearch.org/learningcenter/lesson/record-search-tips-on-familysearch/557>
- Enter "How To Find Your Ancestors In Your Family Tree" in the Search box of the Learning Center: <http://media2.ldscdn.org/assets/family-history/familysearch-help-landing/2015-03-03-how-to-find-your-ancestors-in-your-family-tree-720p-eng.mp4>